



Dear Friends in Christ in the Montana Synod,

“We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America share with the Church of Jesus Christ in all times and places the calling to be peacemakers.” So begins the [ELCA’s Social Statement on Peace \(1995\)](#) which I encourage you to read as even more war and violence erupts in our world.

As a people called to be peacemakers, the cry for peace is ongoing in our church. In the Kyrie portion of our liturgy (which means “Lord have mercy”) we often pray “for the peace of the whole world...and for the unity of all” asking, “Lord, have mercy” when we cannot bring about this peace ourselves. This petition unites us in the world’s sufferings and hopes even as we place our faith in the Triune God to empower our work for peace in this world.

But let us remember that the basis of the Church’s calling to seek and to live in peace is found in God’s ultimate peace, the peace that passes all our understanding that is seen most clearly in the loving and non-violent actions of Jesus Christ.

For God’s promise of peace is finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Rejected by humans, Jesus was raised from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that “on earth” there might be “peace” (Luke 2:14). In bringing this peace, Jesus taught love for one’s enemies (Luke 6); he healed those who were oppressed by the consequences of occupation and war; he prayed for his enemies while himself being rejected on the cross; and, above all, through Jesus’ violent death at the hands of those who sought power through destruction, God redeemed the world. (Romans 5:10).

Christ’s reconciling love of enemy proclaims how deeply peace is rooted in who God is and how God works in the world. The cross of Christ enacts God’s resolve for peace once-for-all. Our calling is to proclaim the Gospel of God’s peace and to work for an earthly peace in relationships that are just, harmonious, and free from violence and war.

In this time when war is upon us in yet another way, I invite you into a time of prayer and love for all, both neighbor and enemy. I urge you to pray for the people of the Ukraine and the people of Russia as well as the people of so many other war-torn areas of the world. I urge you to pray for the geo-political leaders and the soldiers who are waging this war. I urge you to pray for all around the globe who will suffer because of this war and so many other on-going conflicts that only increase the poverty, hunger, and oppression of ordinary people who are trying to live their lives with some sense of safety and security.

Finally, I urge you to pray for peace, that God’s peace come among us so that we might:

“beat our swords into ploughshares,
and spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

Some of you may know people from the Ukraine and/or Russia and are hearing of their sufferings firsthand. A couple of pastoral leaders with connections to the Montana Synod to especially remember in prayer include Rev. Bradn Buerkle, son of Synod Council member Lana Buerkle (Plevna), who serves as a pastor in Russia; and Rev. Kyle

Svennungsen and his family who are missionaries in Slovakia, a neighbor to the Ukraine. Please keep them in your prayers as well. We will include an update from them in the news next week.

In the meantime, let us pray: Gracious and holy God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to true. Lead us from despair to hope from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our relationships and our world.

In Christ we pray. Amen

In Christ's Peace, Bishop Laurie
